

Capture of Fort M'Kay, Prairie du Chien, in 1814 /

CAPTURE OF FORT M'KAY, PRAIRIE DU CHIEN, IN 1814.

BY DOUGLAS BRYMNER.¹

¹ Adapted, by special permission, from the Report on *Canadian Archives for 1887* (pp. xxvi–xxx, civ–cix), by Douglas Brymner, archivist.— Ed.

With the exception of Bibaud (*Histoire du Canada, Domination Anglaise* , p. 181) none of the general histories of Canada give any account of the capture of Fort Shelby, afterwards Fort McKay, and its retention till the close of the war of 1812. The village of Prairie du Chien, beside which was the fort, is, it may be stated, on the junction of the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers, and the expedition was sent out by Col. Robert McDouall,² commanding at Michilimackinac, who gave the command to Major William McKay, with the temporary rank of lieutenant colonel. His report to Colonel McDouall, dated 27th July, 1814, and other papers are hereto annexed.

² See *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, ix., p. 193, note.— Ed.

Bibaud's account, although short, is substantially correct. In Lossing's *Field Book of the War of 1812*, a paragraph of three lines states the fact of the capture, but the name of the fort, of the village, and of the officer who effected it, do not appear in the index. It is there stated that the force under McKay amounted to seven hundred men, mostly Indians (p. 851). Colonel McKay in his report gives the total number at six hundred and fifty, of whom one hundred and twenty were Michigan fencibles, Canadian volunteers and officers of the Indian department, the rest being Indians, who proved to be perfectly useless.

In the third volume of the *Wisconsin Historical Collections* is a narrative of the expedition, obtained by Lyman C. Draper from Capt. Augustin Grignon, in the spring of 1857, the

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narrator being then 77 years of age. The narrative differs to some extent from Colonel McKay's official report, 255 which being written at the time is more likely to be correct than a narrative given apparently from memory after the lapse of forty-three years. According to Captain Grignon, Colonel McKay had been engaged in the Indian trade from the year 1793; had been for a short time at Green Bay; returned to Michilimackinac, afterwards traded on the upper Mississippi, and then became a member of the Northwest company. "He was," says Grignon, "a man of intelligence, activity and enterprise, and well fitted to command the contemplated expedition against Prairie du Chien."—(*Wis. Hist. Colls.* , iii., p. 271.) The force under McKay, as given by Grignon, may be thus tabulated:—

WHITE MEN.

Joseph Rolette and Thomas Anderson, both traders, each raised a company of militia at Michilimackinac, and among their engagés of 50 men 1000

Of regulars with officers 20

(Michigan Fencibles under Captain James Pullman, not Pohlman, as stated by Mr. Grignon.)

Militia raised at Green Bay, almost all old men unfit for service 30

150

INDIANS.

Three bands of Sioux sent by Dickson from his force 200

Winnebagoes 100

Menomonees 75

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Chippewas 25

400

Total 550

Grignon says further, that if the force was represented at the time to be larger, it was for effect on the part of the British, to impress the Americans with an idea of their great strength in the Northwest; and on the part of the Americans, in palliation of their loss of Prairie du Chien (*Id.* , p. 272), but it does not seem probable that a commanding officer in an official report would have misrepresented the strength of his force.

In the ninth volume of the *Wisconsin Historical Collections* , the personal narrative and journal of Capt. Thomas G. Anderson are published. Anderson's narrative appears to have been written when he was ninety-one years of age, 256 and many of its statements are at complete variance with all the contemporary documents and with Captain Grignon's account. Written at that age, and fifty-six years after the events it records, the errors in Anderson's narrative are not, perhaps, to be wondered at, but they are nevertheless very serious. Anderson's journal, presumably written at the date it bears, relates to the time he was in temporary command after McKay was sent off to carry out the instructions of Colonel McDouall in other quarters, and before Captain Bulger's arrival. The correspondence between Colonel McKay and Captain Perkins,¹ commanding Fort Shelby, at Prairie du Chien, for the Americans, completely disproves the statements respecting delay on the part of the former in prosecuting the attack. The force left Michilimackinac on the 28th of June, arrived at Green Bay on the 4th or 5th of July, and reached Prairie du Chien on the 17th, at noon. On that same day the following summons was sent:

¹ Joseph Perkins, appointed second lieutenant in the 24th infantry, from Mississippi Territory, Jan. 22, 1813; became first lieutenant Aug. 15, 1813. — Ed.

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Old Fort, Prairie Du Chien , July 17, 1814.

Sir ,—An hour after the receipt of this, surrender to His Majesty's forces under my command, unconditionally, otherwise I order you to defend yourself to the last man. The humanity of a British officer obliges me (in case you should be obstinate) to request you will send out of the way your women and children.

I am, Sir, Your very humble servant, W. McKay , Lt. Col. Commanding the Expedition.

The answer was short and to the point, and appears to have been returned without delay or hesitation:—

Fort Shelby , July 17 th , 1814.

Sir ,—I received your polite note and prefer the latter, and am determined to defend to the last man.

Yours, &c., Jos. Perkins , Capt. Commanding United States Troops.

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The date on the answer was originally written the 16th, but changed apparently at the time, the ink being identical in color, by the proper figure being written over it. Two day after, the fort was surrendered, the letter from the commander being in these terms:

Fort Shelby , July 19 th , 1814.

Sir ,—I am willing to surrender the garrison and troops under my command, provided you will save and protect the officers and men, and prevent the Indians from ill-treating them.

I am respectfully, Your obedient humble servant, Joseph Perkins , Capt., Commander U. S. Troops.

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Col. William McCary, Commanding the Expedition .

The irritation of the Indians, as is shown clearly from Colonel McDouall's letter to General Gordon Drummond, post, was such as to lead Lieut. Colonel McKay to take every precaution for the safety of the American troops, so that he desired Captain Perkins to delay the surrender.

Old Fort, Prairie Du Chein , July 19th 1814.

Sir,—I will thank you to prolong the hour to march out of your fort till eight o'clock to-morrow morning, when you shall march out with the honours of war, parade before the fort, deliver up your arms and put yourself under the protection of the troops under my command.

I am Sir, Your obedient humble servant, W. McKay , Lt.-Col. Commanding Expedition.

It may be stated, as the most positive evidence of the correctness of the dates here given, that the correspondence [in the Canadian archives] is in the respective handwritings of Lieut. Colonel McKay and Captain Perkins, the original letters sent by McKay being of course retained by Perkins, but the copies preserved in the Canadian archives were made by McKay's own hand, whilst the answers are the originals, as is also the report sent to Colonel McDouall. 17

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All the evidence, official and unofficial, shows that no injury was sustained by the Americans, McKay having informed the Indians that any attempt at violence would be sternly repressed, even were it necessary for the white troops to fire on them.

In a memorial from Captain Bulger, addressed to the duke of York, dated the 5th of July, 1815 (Canadian archives, series C, Vol. 721, pp. 62 to 67), asking for promotion, he states (p. 65) that in October, 1814, he was appointed by Colonel McDouall to take command at

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Prairie du Chien, and left on the 29th, the journey occupying a month. The instructions, not dated but indorsed as given on the 29th, the day Captain Bulger left, are in Colonel McDouall's own writing; the latter and other correspondence down to the time when the post was given up are among the papers in the archives acquired from A. E. Bulger, of Montreal, son of Captain Bulger. These have been arranged and bound, and can now be easily consulted at Ottawa.¹

1 Mr. Brymner writes me from Ottawa, under date of April 7, 1889: "I have only been able very roughly to estimate the number of words in the Bulger papers, which appear to be forty thousand or thereabouts."— Ed.

The following letter to Governor Clark,² or officer commanding at St. Louis, contains the closing records of the occupation of Prairie du Chien by the British forces:

2 Gen. William Clark, governor of Missouri Territory. He was born in Virginia, Aug. 1, 1770, the youngest of six brothers, four of whom became famous in the Revolutionary war,—one being George Rogers Clark, the captor of Kaskaskia and Vincennes. In 1784, William went with his family to the present site of Louisville, Ky., where his brother, George Rogers, had built a fort. At the age of 18, William was appointed an ensign; March 7, 1792, became a lieutenant of infantry; in September, 1793, was made adjutant and quartermaster of the 4th sub-legion; resigned on account of ill-health in July, 1796. In March, 1804, President Jefferson made him a second lieutenant of infantry and assigned him to duty in Capt. Merriwether Lewis's Rocky-mountain exploration to the mouth of the Columbia river, Clark being practically the military director of the expedition. January, 1806, he became first lieutenant, but resigned from the army, Feb. 27, 1807, and officiated as Indian agent until congress appointed him brigadier general for the Territory of Upper Louisiana. During the war of 1812, he declined to accept the command then held by Gen. William Hull. In 1813, President Madison appointed him governor of Missouri Territory, which office he held until the organization of the state in 1821, when he was defeated in his candidacy for governor of the commonwealth. In May, 1822, President Monroe appointed him superintendent of

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Indian affairs at St. Louis, and he continued as such until his death, which occurred in that city, Sept. 1, 1838.— Ed.

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Fort McKay, Prairie Du Chien , 23 rd May, 1815.

Sir ,—I have now to acknowledge the receipt of the two despatches sent to me some time ago, viz.: one from His Excellency Governor Clark, the other from Colonel Russell, answers to which it was not in my power to get, conveyed to Saint Louis without imminent hazard to the person carrying the same.

The official intelligence of peace reached me only yesterday, upon which I adopted the most prudent, and at the same time decided, measures, to put a stop to the further hostilities of the Indians; and I most ardently hope, and strongly believe, that the steps I have taken will be attended with the good effects which the British Government and that of the United States are so desirous of.

I propose evacuating this post tomorrow, taking with me the guns, &c., captured in the Fort, in order that they may be delivered up at Makinac, to such officer as the United States may appoint to receive that post. My instructions were to send them down the Mississippi to Saint Louis, if it could be done without hazard to the party conveying them.

My motives for immediately withdrawing from this Post, will be best explained by the enclosed extract from the instructions of Lieut. Colonel McDouall commanding at Michillimakinac. I have not the smallest hesitation in declaring my decided opinion that the presence of a detachment of British and United States troops, at the same time, at Fort McKay, would be the means of embroiling either one party or the other, in a fresh rupture with the Indians, which I presume it is the wish and desire of both Governments to avoid.

Should the measures I have adopted prove in the smallest degree contrary to the spirit and intent of the Treaty of Peace, I beg that it may not be considered by the Government

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of the United States as proceeding from any other 260 motive than a desire of avoiding any further trouble or contention with the Indians, and of promoting the harmony and good understanding, so recently restored to the two countries.

I have the honour to be Sir, Your most obedient servant, A. Bulger , Capt.

Commanding a detachment of the British troops on the Mississippi.

To His Excellency Governor Clark, Or Officer commanding at Saint Louis .

COLONEL M'DOUALL TO GENERAL DRUMMOND.

Michilimakinac , 16 July, 1814.

Sir ,—I beg leave to acquaint you that on the 21 st Nov. I received information of the capture of Prairie des Chiens on the Mississippi by the American Genl. Clarke who had advanced from St. Louis with six or eight very large Boats with about three hundred men for the purpose of establishing himself at that post by building a Fort the situation being very eligible for that purpose. As the greater part of my Indian Force was from the countries adjoining La prairie des Chiens, they felt themselves not a little uneasy at the proximity of the enemy to their defenceless families, but on the arrival next day of the Susell or tête de Chien,¹ a distinguished Chief of the Winnebago Nation (who came to supplicate assistance) & on his mentioning the circumstances of its Capture, particularly the deliberate and barbarous murder of seven men of his own nation, the sentiment of indignation & desire to revenge was universal amongst them; all were bent upon returning for the deliverance of their Wives and Children, & to drive from their Country these unprincipled Invaders whose appetite for encroachment grows by what it feeds upon and can never be satisfied.

¹ See *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, ix., p. 300.— Ed.

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I saw at once the imperious necessity which existed of endeavouring by every means to dislodge the American Genl from his new conquest, & make him relinquish the immense 261 tract of country he had seized upon in consequence & which brought him into the very heart of that occupied by our friendly Indians, There was no alternative it must either be done or there was an end to our connexion with the Indians for if allowed to settle themselves by dint of threats, bribes, & sowing divisions among them, tribe after tribe would be gained over or subdued, & thus would be destroyed the only barrier which protects the great trading establishments of the North West and the Hudson's Bay Companys. Nothing could then prevent the enemy from gaining the source of the Mississippi, gradually extending themselves by the Red River to Lake Winnipic, from whence the descent of Nelsons River to York Fort would in time be easy. The total subjugation of the Indians on the Mississippi would either lead to their extermination by the enemy or they would be spared on the express condition of assisting them to expel us from Upper Canada. Viewing the subject in this light I determined to part with the Sioux and Winebago Indians to give them every encouragement and assistance, & even to weaken ourselves here, rather than the enterprise should not succeed. I appointed Mr. Rolette and Mr. Anderson, & Mr. Grignon of Green Bay to be captains of volunteers, the two former raised 63 men in two days, whom I completed, armed and cloathed, the latter takes with him all the settlers of Green Bay. I held several councils with the Indians on this important business. The solemn & impressive eloquence of the tête de Chien, excited a general enthusiasm, & never was more zeal or unanimity shown amongst them, this chief is scarcely inferior to Tecumseth, & I doubt not will act a distinguished part in the campaign; he was particularly urgent with me for two favours—the first—one of their Fathers officers to command the expedition,—the second—one of their Father's big guns to strike terror into their enemys—the latter request had been repeatedly made by most of the Indian chiefs, & I agreed to let them have the three pounder I brought from York, chiefly from the novelty of the thing among the Indians, & the effect it will have in augmenting their numbers, I attached to it a Bombadier of the 262 Royal Artillery & a sergeant, corporal & twelve smart fellows of the Michigan Fencibles. I next appointed

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Major McKay to command the whole, with the local rank of lieutenant colonel, & in thus acceding to both their requests the chiefs told me they had not a wish ungratified, that they & their young men would die in defense of their gun, but as to McKay they had not words to express the fulness of their delight & satisfaction; he is certainly well qualified for the task he has undertaken, being determined yet conciliatory, well acquainted with the language & mode of managing the Indians, & familiar with the place intended to be attacked.

Everything being prepared, Lt. Col. McKay sailed under a salute from the Garrison on the 28th ultimo, taking 75 of the Michigan Fencibles and Canadian Volunteers & about 136 Indians. He arrived at Green Bay about six days after, at which place such was the great zeal displayed, that his force was immediately doubled, but as every arrangement had been made previous to his departure for the junction of the Winnebago & Follsovine¹ Indians at the portage of the Ouisconsing River, I have scarcely a doubt but that his force at that place will beat least 1,500 men, besides being afterwards joined by the Sioux from River St. Peters & other tribes. Upon the whole, this rapid advance of Genl. Clark's upon the Mississippi, may ultimately prove a lucky circumstance, it has already tended to unite the Indians in the common cause, & tribes who before have cherished an hereditary enmity for nearly centuries have, on this occasion, forgot their ancient feuds, & vie with each other who shall be foremost in chastising the merciless invaders of their country; the horrible cruelties which the enemy in their late operations have been guilty of, has roused such a spirit of vengeance amongst them that I am apprehensive if they do not effect their escape, neither the Genl. or his troops stand much chance of being able to recount the tragic particulars that will ensue. This Ruffian on taking the Prairie des Chiens, captured eight Indians of the Winnebago Nation; they cajoled them at first with affected kindness, set provisions

1 Folles Avoine, or Menomonees.— Ed.

263 provisions before them; & in the act of eating treacherously fell upon them & murdered seven in cold blood—the eighth escaped, to be the sad historian of their horrible fate!

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The tête de Chien has told me this story, unable to support his indignation at their being butchered like so many dogs. An even has happened since of so aggravated a nature as must awaken in the breast of apathy itself, every latent quality of revenge and shut the gates of mercy upon these relentless assassins. Col. McKay writes me that Genl. Clarke invited, & by much promises of friendship got hold of four more of the Winebagoes; he shut them up in a log house, & afterwards shot them thro' between the logs. One of them was the brother of the Susell or tête de Chien! Another Victim was the wife of *Le Feuille*, the first Chief of the Sioux, who was with me here. After a recital of these atrocities it is scarcely necessary to ask if the enemy are likely to meet with mercy, but do they deserve it? By this time Col. McKay is near his destination. *If successful and the thing is practicable*, I have directed him to descend the Mississippi and also to attack the Piorias Fort¹ on the Illinois River.

¹ Fort Clark, at Peoria, built by American troops under Gen. Benjamin Howard, in the autumn of 1813.—See Reynolds's *Pion. Hist. Illinois* (ed. 1887), pp. 408, 409.— Ed.

I have the honour to be, &c., R. McDouall, Lt. Col. Comg.

To Lt. Genl. Drummond.

COLONEL M'KAY TO COLONEL M'DOUALL.

Prairie du Chein, Fort McKay, July 27th, 1814.

Lt.-Colonel R. McDouall, Commanding Michilimackinac and its Dependencies, &c., &c.

Sir,— I have the honour to communicate to you that on my arrival here the 17th inst. at 12 o'clock, my force amounting to 650 men, of which 120 were Michigan Fencibles, Canadian Volunteers and Officers of the Indian Department; the remainder were Indians that proved to be perfectly 264 useless. I found that the enemy had a small fort, situated on a small hill immediately behind the village, with two block houses perfectly safe from Indians, and

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that they had six pieces cannon and sixty or seventy effective men, officers included. That lying at anchor in the middle of the Mississippi, immediately in front of the fort, a very large gunboat, called Governor Clark, gunboat No. 1. She mounts 14 pieces cannon, some six, three, and a number of cohorns, is manned with 70 or 80 men with fire-arms, and measures 70 feet keel. This floating blockhouse is so constructed that she can be rowed in any direction, the men on board being perfectly safe from small arms while they can use their own to the greatest advantage. She goes remarkably fast, particularly down the current, being rowed by 32 oars.

At half past 12 o'clock I sent Capt. Anderson, with a flag of truce to invite them to surrender, which they refused. My intention was not to have made an attack till next morning at daylight, but it being impossible to control the Indians I ordered our gun to play upon the gunboat, which she did with a surprising good effect, for in the course of three hours, the time the action lasted, she fired 86 rounds, two-thirds of which went into the Governor Clark. They kept up a constant fire upon us, both from the boat and fort; we were about an hour between two fires, having run our gun up within musket shot of the fort, from whence we beat the boat out of her station. She cut her cable and ran down the current and sheltered under an island. We were obliged to desist, it being impossible with our little barges to attempt to board her and our only gun in pursuit of her would have exposed our whole camp to the enemy. She therefore made her escape.

I immediately sent off a canoe with three men, an loway that came from Mackinac with me and two of six Sauks that joined me in the Fox River. I gave them four kegs gunpowder and ordered them to pass the gunboat and get as soon as possible to the rapids at the Rock River, where it is generally believed the gunboat will run aground, and have all the Sauks assembled to annoy the men and prevent their debarking to get firewood, &c. The next morning I 265 despatched two boats under Capt. Grignon with one officer and 26 men to go in pursuit of her and observe her motions. They fell in with her the day after leaving this, but having only small arms could do her no injury. Capt. Grignon summoned her to surrender to no purpose; he, however, followed her up till within a league of the

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rapids, when they met another of the enemy's gunboats, tho smaller, arranged in the same manner as the Governor Clark. The wind favouring her she made after our boats, but could not overtake them. She in a short time threw her anchor and Capt. Grignon very improperly made the best of his way here, since when I have had no news from there, notwithstanding I have despatched canoes almost daily ever since. On the nineteenth, finding there was only six rounds round shot remaining, including three of the enemy's we had picked up, the day was employed in making lead bullets for the gun and throwing up two breastworks, one within 700 yards and the other within 450 yards of the fort. At six in the evening, everything being prepared, I marched to the first breastwork, from whence I intended to throw in the remaining six rounds iron ball red hot into the fort in order to set it on fire, the only apparent recourse. At the moment the first ball was about being put into the cannon a white flag was put out at the fort and immediately an officer came down with a note and surrendered. It being now too late, I deferred making them deliver up their arms in form till morning, but immediately placed a strong guard in the fort and took possession of the artillery. From the time of our landing till they surrendered the Indians kept up a constant but perfectly useless fire upon the fort; the distance from where they fired was too great to do execution even had the enemy been exposed to view.

I am happy to inform you that notwithstanding every man in the Michigan Fencibles, Canadian Volunteers and officers in the Indian Department behaved as well as I could possibly wish and tho' in the midst of a hot fire not a man was even wounded except three Indians, that is one Puant, one Follavoine and one Sioux, all severely but not dangerously. I beg you will excuse my not having it in my power 266 to give you a full account of the things taken in the fort, for a man having to do with Indians in my present situation is more tormented than if in the infernal regions. One Lieut. 24th U. S. Regt., 1 Militia Capt., 1 Militia Lieut., 3 Sergts., 3 Corporals, 2 Musicians, 53 Privates, 1 Commissary, 1 Interpreter, 2 women and 1 child—1 iron six-pounder mounted on garrison carriage, 1 iron three-pounder on field carriage, 3 swivels, 61 stand arms, 4 swords, 1 field carriage for six-

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pounder and a good deal of ammunition, 28 barrels pork and 46 barrels flour. These are the principal articles found in the fort when surrendered.

I will now take the liberty to request your particular attention to Captains Rolette and Anderson, the former for his activity in many instances but particularly during the action, the action having commenced unexpectedly he run down from the upper end of the village with his comp'y thro' the heat of the fire to receive orders, and before and since in being instrumental in preserving the citizens being quite ruined by pillaging Indians—and the latter for his unwearied attention in keeping everything in order during the rout and his activity in following up the cannon during the action and assisting in transporting the ammunition. Lieut. Porlier of Capt. Anderson's company, Lieuts. Graham and Brisbois of the Indian Department, Capt. Dease of the Prairie du Chien Militia and Lieut. Powell of the Green Bay all acted with that courage and activity so becoming Canadian Militia or Volunteers. The Interpreters also behaved well but particularly Mr. St. Germain from the Sault Ste. Marie and Mr. Renville Sioux Interpreter; they absolutely prevented their Indians committing any outrages in the plundering way. Commissary Honoré who acted Lieut. in Capt. Rolette's Company whose singular activity in saving and keeping an exact account of provisions surprised me and without which we must unavoidably have lost much of that essential article. The Michigan Fencibles who manned the gun behaved with great courage, coolness and regularity. As to the Sergt. of Artillery too much cannot be said of him for the fate of the day and our successes are to be 267 attributed in a great measure to his courage and well managed firing.

I am sorry to be under the necessity of reproaching some of the Indians, but Puants particularly, for shameful depredations committed during the action on the 17th and since. Many of them (Puants) in place of meeting the enemy immediately on their arrival ran off to the farms, killed the inhabitants' cattle and pillaged their houses even to the covering off their beds, and leaving many without a second shirt to put on their backs. Even in the village they did the same outrages, breaking to pieces what they could not carry away.

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This prevented the Militia joining me, being absolutely obliged to keep guard over their houses, &c.

The Sioux, Soteux,¹ Court Oreilles and part of the Follavoines though perfectly useless obeyed my orders pretty well, but the Puants behaved in a most villanous manner and were I permitted to decide their fate should never receive a shilling's worth of presents from Government, on the contrary I would cut them off to a man. They despise the idea of receiving orders from an officer that does not hold a blanket in one hand and a piece of pork in the other to pay them to listen to what he may have to say, audaciously saying they are under no obligations to us but they have themselves preserved the country. The moment they had finished pillaging and got their share of the prize they marched off, except about ten men who are this instant in the act of cutting up the green wheat, which if they do not desist I shall be obliged to confine them to the fort, not only for the good of the citizens but for our own safety as provisions will be very scarce till after harvest.

1 Sauteurs, or Chippewas.— Ed.

Since the surrender of the Fort and the departure of the Puants the inhabitants have all come forward and taken the oath of allegiance, and are now doing duty on patrol or otherwise as required.

As to going down the Mississippi and returning by the way of Chigago as was originally intended, is now rendered impracticable for the present--no dependence whatever to be placed in the Indians except the Sioux, the others having 268 abandoned me immediately on the receipt of their share of the prize, my trifling force of Volunteers cannot warrant anything honorable by making that tour.

I beg to remark that in case the intention is to retain this place, a reinforcement of Fifty regular Troops would be necessary, a quantity of ammunition, agreeable to a list herewith, for the guns, and pork for their provisions. As to flour plenty of that article can be procured here in a month and a half from this. My reason for making this remark is that my decided

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opinion is that from this to the fall an attack may undoubtedly be looked for from below, and if four or five of these floating blockhouses come up armed, as the Governor Clarke was, our present force is certainly not equal to prevent their repulsing us unless more particularly favored by providence than before.

As soon as I can get certain information of the enemies situation, and if I find they are fortifying themselves anywhere from this to Fort Madison, I will go down and try and dislodge them. But if I am convinced there is no danger by leaving this, I will as soon as such news may be ascertained go into Mackinac. But not otherwise.

It was with much difficulty I preserved the prisoners from the Puants, but having made use of supplications, then threats, &c., till at length they became less violent, and at last by keeping a strong guard over them, the Indians went off doing them no injury.

My intention was to have kept the prisoners here till I got certain information from below, and if the enemy came here and fired a single shot, to have sacrificed them to the Indians. But I am sorry that circumstances oblige me absolutely to send them to St. Louis. By keeping them here any longer would cut me quite short of provisions, and as to sending in to Mackinac, a sufficient force to guard them would leave me quite destitute of resources in case of an attempt from below, I have therefore determined to send them off to-morrow morning and let them take their risk under a small guard. The enemy had three men wounded in the Fort, two severely but not dangerously, the other slightly, and report says five men were killed and ten wounded in the 269 gunboat, but more surely must have been killed and wounded from the great number of shots that went into her. I take the liberty to refer you to Robert Dickson, Esquire, for his opinion respecting my information of the Puants.

Report says that 400 Cavalry are about this time to leave St. Louis for here; if so, they will give us our hands full.

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I send this by Indians express to the Green Bay from whence I have directed Mr. Porlier to send off a canoe to Mackinac. I adopt this method being the shortest route, from here by land the Indians will reach the Bay in four days and four from that to Mackinac, which is the shortest passage that can possibly be expected.

My force here at present amounts to about 300 strong, that is 200 Michigans, Volunteers and Militia and 100 Sioux, Soteux, Court Oreilles and Puants.

I have the honor to be, Sir, Your most obedient humble servant, W. McKay , Lt.-Colonel Commanding.

Supplement.— After my despatches were gone about ten minutes a few Sauks arrived from the Rapids at the Rock River with two Canadians and bring the following information. On the instant six American barges, three of which were armed, were coming up and camped in the Rapids that night; that in the course of the night the party of Indians having the four kegs gunpowder I sent from this on the 17th reached them. The barges being camped at short distances from each other, they on the 22nd early in the morning attacked the lower, they killed about one hundred persons, took five pieces cannon, burnt the barge, and the other barges seeing this disaster and knowing there were British troops here run off. This is perhaps one of the most brilliant actions fought by Indians only since the commencement of the war. I think now there is little danger here for the present, but I have not the smallest doubt but an attempt will be made either this fall or early in the spring. I will send off to-morrow for the cannon, the size cannot be properly ascertained but from the description the Indians give 270 there are 2 three-pounders and 3 mortars. The Sauks, Renards and Kickapoos were engaged in this action, they lost two men and one woman killed. To give an idea how desperate the Indians were, the women even jumped on board with their hoes, &c., some breaking heads, others breaking casks, some trying to cut holes in her bottom to sink her, and others setting fire to her decks. As one of the barges was making from shore the loway that came from Mackinac with me jumped

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on her deck and with his hatchet cut a hole and fired his gun among the Americans in the boat, then plunged into the river and made his escape ashore.

Those Indians came here for a supply of ammunition. I send them off to morrow morning with ten kegs gunpowder and a few presents of goods, &c. It is very fortunate that I received your reinforcement of gunpowder at the Bay, the demand for that article has been very great, as also for tobacco, but now both are nearly out. I shall now go to work and have the fort, &c., put in as good repair as circumstances will admit.

I was taken very ill last evening with a swelling on the right side of the head, and has kept me in a violent fever ever since. I believe it is what in Canada is generally called the *mumps* .

I have the honor to be, Your very obedient and humble servant, W. McKay , Lt.-Colonel Commanding.

Fort McKay, 29 th July, 1814.

Lt.Colonel McDouall .